

**SPOTLIGHT
ON:**

- **Ability Awareness**
- **Assessment Advice**
- **Community Classroom Changes**
- **Ask Pat!**

In My Neighborhood: Community Awareness in Pre-K

As natural born learners, children are endlessly curious about the world around them. By the time they reach Pre-K, children are ready to explore and learn about the various communities in which they live. Children first experience community at home as they learn to be part of their family community. Often children's next experiences with community occur at early child care environments as children learn to be part of classrooms in child care centers, family day care homes or faith based facilities. In Pre-K, children become part of the preschool community and begin to explore and understand how they are part of even larger communities like their neighborhoods, schools, and cities. Talking about your community provides perfect opportunities to invite visitors to your classroom. Be creative. Who are the people your children see regularly: the mail carrier, crossing guard, clerk at the grocery store, dentist? Look outside your door – your communities are there waiting for you and your children to explore.

While the spirit of neighborliness was important on the frontier because neighbors were so few, it is even more important now because our neighbors are so many. ~Lady Bird Johnson.

Won't You Be My Neighbor? by Fred M. Rogers

At the beginning of each episode of his children's television show, *Mister Roger's Neighborhood*, Fred Rogers sang this song about his neighborhood.

Teaching it to your class could be a fun way to introduce the concept of neighbors to your children. If you're not familiar with the tune or would like to learn more about *Mister Roger's Neighborhood*, visit the official website at:

<http://pbskids.org/rogers/>

It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood,
A beautiful day for a neighbor.
Would you be mine?
Could you be mine?...

It's a neighborly day in this beauty wood,
A neighborly day for a beauty.
Would you be mine?
Could you be mine?...

I've always wanted to have a neighbor just like you.

I've always wanted to live in a neighborhood with you.

So, let's make the most of this beautiful day.

Since we're together we might as well say:

Would you be mine?
Would you be mine?
Won't you be my neighbor?
Won't you please,
Won't you please?

Please won't you be my neighbor?



Children are curious about similarities and differences they notice about one another.

Ability Awareness in the Pre-K Classroom

Classrooms across America are evolving into inclusive learning environments where children with and without disabilities learn side-by-side. Often, children are curious about similarities and differences they notice about one another. The Pre-K classroom is a wonderful environment to educate children and create understanding about people with special needs.

I Like My Friends

Ask your students to talk about things they have in common with their friends: enjoying pizza, riding bikes, etc. and things that are different or unique about each of them: Jennie has curly hair; Tommy likes to listen to rap music. To explore this further, the class can play the game, *Alike and Different*. To play:

1. Seat the children in a circle. Start by saying, "I have friends who ____" and name a characteristic (ex. "who wear glasses").
2. All of the children who match the statement (in this case, who wear glasses) stand and move into the middle of the circle.
3. The teachers and children count to see which group is bigger: the group standing in the middle or the group seated in the circle.

4. The teacher then names another trait. Children seated in the circle who match the teacher's new statement move to the middle and the children in the middle sit down if they do not have the trait.
5. Repeat the steps with different characteristics.

As the game repeats, be sure to choose characteristics that only 1-2 children have as well as characteristics that many children have.

A great way to wrap up the game might be to ask the children to imagine what it would be like if the teacher said, "I have friends who like to have fun!"

During the game reinforce the idea that all children have similarities as well as differences. After the game ask questions such as these:

- What did you learn about your friends from playing this game?
- What things did you have in common with or different from your friends?
- Were there more similarities or differences?
- What would the world be like if we all were the same?

Many wonderful books have been written for young children about people with differences and disabilities. Using

books during large and small group reading activities can create effective opportunities to talk about differences. Below are books that deal with this important topic.

Friends at School by Rochelle Burnett
Russ and the Firehouse by Janet Elizabeth Rickert
Where's Chimp? by Bernice Rabe
Moses Goes to a Concert by Isaac Millman
I Like Me! by Nancy L. Carlson
ABC for You and Me by Margaret Gurnis

You can find additional resources for creating inclusive Pre-K classrooms in Georgia's Pre-K Program Content Standards at http://www.decal.ga.gov/Documents/PreK/Content_Standards_Full.pdf



Assessment Corner—Preliminary Checklist Ratings

It is time to mark your first developmental checklist for the Spring term in pencil. Remember, you must gather documentation for all 55 indicators for this term. Plan small and large group activities to assist you in gathering documentation. New teachers who have completed assessment training can start using the developmental checklist this term. Keep in mind, the developmen-

tal checklist is available as a spreadsheet on our website. You can use a paper/pencil version or a computer version of the spreadsheet. It is up to you to decide what format you want to use to mark the developmental checklist (individual checklist on each child, paper/pencil spreadsheet, or computer spreadsheet). If you have questions about the spreadsheet, contact your Pre-K consultant.

Last month we started piloting WSS online with two hundred teachers across the state. Training was conducted in January. This is an exciting time for our Pre-K program. We will keep you informed about WSS online in upcoming issues of the newsletter.

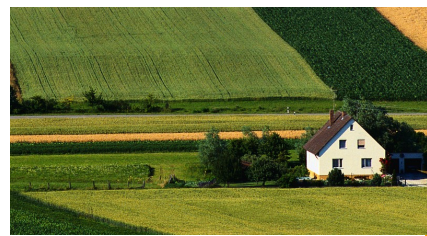
Science and Exploring Your Community

Creating a sensory center allows children to expand their understanding of the world in which they live. A sensory center will boost vocabulary development, refine skills in listening, discrimination, and decision making by encouraging children to engage in hands-on experiences. A sensory center supports children in becoming more sensitive to the sights, sounds, and textures of their environment.

A field trip to a local grocery store provides children multitude opportunities to learn through using their senses. Take photographs of your community to and from the grocery store to print out and display in the sensory center. Guests for classroom experiences might include a trainer for a guide dog program, optometrist, chef, baker, audiologist, or musician.

Sight Activities:

1. Take pictures of various businesses and homes children recognize from their environment. Make several photocopies of each picture. Encourage children to cut/glue the photocopies onto small recycled boxes creating representations of their town.
2. Cut a large opening in the lids of four shoe boxes. Tape a different colored piece of cellophane paper on the bottom side of each lid. Collect various items that will fit inside the shoe boxes. Children place items inside the boxes to see how things look in different colors. Extend the activity by making colored glasses from cellophane wrap for children to wear as they explore inside/outside environments.



3. Provide sunglasses, eye glasses, binoculars, telescopes, and magnifiers and encourage children to use these tools to explore.

Smell Activities:

1. Create small sensory boxes by filling shoe boxes with lids with dried coffee grounds, pot-pourri, loose tea, powdered lemon aide mix, cypress mulch, etc..
2. Place a bouquet of eucalyptus in a vase for children to experience. Provide small scented candles or "Car Jar" air fresheners for exploring.
3. Smelly bottles can be created

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Science and Exploring Your Community

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- from empty prescription bottles with cotton balls soaked with different smells: vanilla/orange extract, perfume, vinegar, etc. Punch holes in the lids with small nails. Children smell them and guess what they are smelling. Pairs of smelling bottles can be made for matching.
4. Mix one part water to two parts Jell-o and mix. Children paint with fruity smelling water colors.

Touch Activities:

1. Create a sensory box by cutting a hole in the side of a large shoe box. Place a variety of textured items (fabrics, nature items, sandpaper, classroom items) into the box. Place duplicate items in an open box. Children try to match pairs of items, one hand exploring inside the closed box and the other

hand exploring the open box.

2. Place covered containers of instant snow, goop, silly-putty, and glurch in the sensory center.
3. Make homemade mud by mixing 10 cups used coffee grounds, 5 cups dry oatmeal, 2 cups salt, 2 cups water.
4. In sturdy freezer bags put playdough, rice, beans, peas, marbles, cornstarch, hair gel, sugar, water, sand, flour, or any other feely substance. Tape shut with duct tape.

Taste Activities:

1. Mix a large batch of trail mix and place servings into individually labeled zip lock bags. As children visit the sensory center, let them choose their serving and sample various items.
2. Provide individual serving packages of Kool-Aid dry mixes and cups for children to mix and drink for a

tasting experience.

Hearing Activities:

1. Create a tape of voices children hear in the classroom. Ask children to match pictures of their classmates to the voices they hear on the tape. Vary this activity by going on a listening walk and creating a tape of outside sounds.
2. Fill pairs of small plastic bottles with like items creating sound shakers. Children can work alone matching like sounds or work with a partner: one shakes bottles behind a curtain allowing their partner to guess if sounds are the same or different.
3. Provide raw materials for children to create their own musical instruments.

Additional ideas can be found at <http://www.sedl.org/scimath/pasopartners/senses/>



Exploring with Families

Invite families into the classroom to use their senses. Provide cotton candy to the children and ask them to use their five senses to explore, observe, experience the cotton candy. Have a family member help children record their observations. Once children have finished exploring the cotton candy, submerge a small piece in water and see what happens. This is a great opportunity to teach parents the importance of children's dictation.

Exploring Your Community - Changes for Your Classroom

Reading Area:

Bark, George by Jules Feiffer

Bear About Town by Stella Blackstone,

Career Day by Anne Rockwell

Cooperation by Lucia Raatma

Community Helpers from A to Z by Bobbie Kalman

Feeling Thankful by Shelly Rotner

Firefighters A to Z by Chris L. Demarest

I'm Taking a Trip on My Train by Shirley Neitzel

If I Were Your Father by Margaret Park Bridges

If I Were Your Mother by Margaret Park Bridges

Listen to the City by Rachel Isadora

On the Town: A Community Adventure by Judith Caseley

My Town by Rebecca Treays

My Street by Rebecca Treays

There's a Map on My Lap!: All About Maps by Tish Rabe

Train Song by Harriet Ziefert

Walking by the Rio by Adrian Warren

What Can You Do in the Snow? by Anna Grossnickle Hines

What is a Teacher? by Barbara Lehn

When Winter Comes by Nancy Van Laan

Where Do I Live? by Neil Chesnow

Diversity Books

Bedtime by Ruth Freeman Swain

Big Mama by Tony Crunk

Jobs Around My Neighborhood / Oficios en mi vecindario by Gladys Rosa-Mendoza

Liliana's Grandmothers by Leyla Torres

Lots of Dads by Shelley Rotner

My Steps by Sally Derby

The Park Bench by Fumiko Takeshita

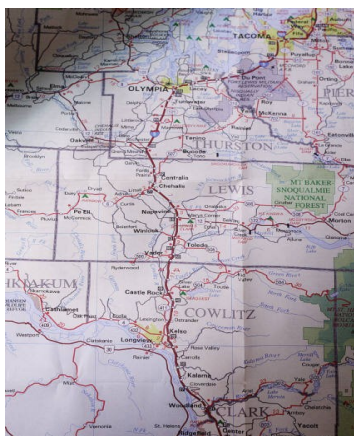
The Tortilla Factory by Ruth Wright Paulsen

Writing Area:

Add vocabulary words such as: bank, building, city, community, family, home, hospital, house, library, neighborhood, street, park, people, police station, school, store, and town. Remember to also include words with pictures of community helpers (baker, chef, construction worker, dentist, doctor, farmer, firefighter, hair dresser, librarian, mail carrier, nurse, optometrist, plumber, police officer, teacher, soldier, and veterinarian).

Include post office materials and props.

Paint a large box blue. Cut windows out and hang a sign. Add a variety of fun writing materials – various types and sizes of writing implements, variety of paper, large and small envelopes, post cards, stationery, stamps (stickers), a scale, a mail carrier uniform, etc.



Block Area:

The children can build their own community using the blocks. Enhance their work by including: a doll house, people figures, boxes in various sizes, blueprint paper, clipboards, writing implements, maps, etc.

Dramatic Play Area:

Veterinarian Office – stuffed animals, stethoscope, doctor's kit, grooming brushes, empty grooming bottles, towels, pet bowls, empty pet food containers, dog bones, lab coat and "scrub" shirts, appointment book and writing utensils, cash register and play money, posters of pets, dog/cat reference books.

Art Area:

Include a variety of vehicles found in the community (car, truck, ambulance, fire truck, construction, etc.). Encourage children to make paintings by rolling vehicles through paint and then on paper.

Include a variety of magazines. Let the children look through and cut out community helpers. Let them dictate a sentence about what type of community helper they would like to be.

Math/Manipulatives:

Add community helper puzzles.

Science

Soak hard boiled eggs in Coke overnight to make the shells yellow. Provide toothpaste and toothbrushes and allow the children to brush the eggs and watch them turn white again.



Ask Pat

Dear Pat,

I was recently working on my classroom and started thinking about the requirements to have reading and writing in the interest areas. I sometimes get stuck on what kinds of books I should put out especially in areas like art and dramatic play. What do you suggest?

– Wondering about Books

Dear Wondering,

Having books throughout the classroom and in the interest areas allows books to be an essential, fundamental component of the classroom and the play that takes place daily. Look for books that relate in some way to the areas where you place them. The intent is not to grab three or four random books and put them in an area to meet the requirement.

These books should be purposefully picked. For example:

Blocks - look for books about building, tools, equipment, transportation. Examples include:

City Signs by Zoran Milich
C Is for Construction: Big Trucks and Diggers from A to Z by Caterpillar,
Tools by Taro Miura

Dramatic play - look for books about cooking, food, play themes, dressing up. Examples include:

I Eat Vegetables by Hannah Tofts
Pete's a Pizza by William Steiga
Miss Polly has a Dolly by Pamela Duncan Edwards

Math and Manipulatives - look for books about measuring, counting, patterning, size comparison. Examples include:

The Doorbell Rang by Pat Hutchins

Let's Count by Tana Hoban
Pattern Fish by Trudy Harris

Art - look for books about painting, combining colors, visual discrimination. Examples include:

Mouse Paint by Ellen Stoll Walsh
Little Blue and Little Yellow by Leo Lionni,
The Dot by Peter H. Reynolds

Science - look for books about nature, growing seeds, how things work. Examples include:

Leaf Man by Lois Ehlert
In the Small, Small Pond by Denise Fleming
Dinosaur Bones by Bob Barner

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Classroom Kitchen—Popcorn Balls

Ingredients:

- 1 bag popped microwave popcorn with unpopped kernels removed
- 1 bag Kraft caramel squares
- 2 Tbsp. water

Directions:

Put 2 Tbsp. of water in a pan with 22 unwrapped caramel squares and cook over low heat stirring until smooth (no lumps). Be careful not to scorch the caramel. Place the popcorn in a large mixing bowl and pour the caramel over it. Gently stir until the caramel coats the popcorn. Then press the popcorn into small 3-inch diameter balls and set on wax paper to finish cooling. You can usually get 8 to 10 popcorn balls from this recipe.

Community Fingerplays

Lonely Bus Driver

One lonely bus driver all alone and blue,
He picked up a passenger and then there
were two.

Two people riding, they stopped by a
tree,

They picked up a passenger, and then
there were three.

Three people riding, they stopped by a
store,

They picked up a passenger, and then
there were four.

Four people riding, happy and alive,

They picked up a passenger, and then
there were five.

Five people riding open swung the door,

Four passengers got off the bus,

The driver's alone once more.

The Mail Carrier

See the mail carrier

Dressed in blue

He's walking, walking, walking

Do you think he'll bring to you

Some postcards and a letter too?

The People in Your Neighborhood - A song from Sesame Street

Oh, who are the people in your
neighborhood

In your neighborhood

In your neighborhood.

Oh, who are the people in your
neighborhood,

The people that you meet each day.

Oh, the fireman is a person in your
neighborhood,

In your neighborhood, in your neighbor-
hood.

The fireman is a person in your neighbor-
hood,

A person that you meet each day.

Add verses with other people in the
neighborhood: grocer, mail carrier, shoe-
maker, etc.



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